

What is claimed is:

- Sub a17
1. An interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided and wherein at least some of the program guide data is current program guide data, the system comprising:
 - a continuous data stream processor configured to select the current program guide data for inclusion in a continuous data stream;
 - distribution equipment configured to distribute the current program guide data selected by the continuous data stream processor in the continuous data stream to user television equipment;
 - a program guide server; and
 - an interactive television program guide implemented on the user television equipment configured to obtain the current program guide data from the continuous data stream and to obtain at least some of the program guide data from the program guide server in response to requests generated by the interactive television program guide.
 2. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
 - the current program guide data comprises one or more unique identifiers; and
 - the interactive television program guide is configured to perform a real-time action when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.
 3. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
 - the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program; and

the interactive television program guide is configured to display the program reminder for the program when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

4. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to prefetch current program guide data from the continuous data stream when the reminder is displayed by the program guide.

5. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
the real-time action comprises authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to authorize the viewing of a pay-per-view program when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

6. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
the real-time action comprises authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to prefetch current program guide data from the continuous data stream when the viewing of the pay-per-view program is authorized by the program guide.

7. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
the real-time action comprises recording a program; and

the interactive television program guide is configured to record a program when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

8. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
the real-time action comprises locking a program and prompting a user for a control code; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to lock a program and prompt the user for a control code when a particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

9. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program of a program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to display the program reminder for the program of a program grouping when a particular unique identifier of the one or more unique identifiers is in the continuous data stream.

10. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program of a program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to prefetch current program guide data

from the continuous data stream when the reminder is displayed by the program guide.

11. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program of a
program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to authorize the viewing of a pay-per-
view program of a program grouping when a particular
unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

12. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program of a
program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to prefetch current program guide data
from the continuous data stream when the viewing of the
pay-per-view program of a program grouping is
authorized by the program guide.

13. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises recording
a program of a program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to record a program of a program grouping

when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

14. The system defined in claim 2 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises locking a program of a program grouping and prompting a user for a control code; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to lock a program of a program grouping and prompt the user for a control code when a particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

15. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the continuous data stream processor obtains current program guide data from the program guide server.

16. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the continuous data stream processor prioritizes the current program guide data; and
the distribution equipment cycles the current program guide data in the continuous data stream according to how the current program guide data was prioritized by the continuous data stream processor.

17. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide processes the current program guide data in real-time and with no data caching.

18. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the user television equipment comprises hardware

filtering circuitry configured to filter current program guide data from the continuous data stream based on a tag.

19. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide prefetches current program guide data from the continuous data stream.

20. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide prefetches program guide data from the program guide server.

21. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the interactive television program guide is configured to invoke a remote procedure call on the program guide server; and
the program guide server is configured to provide the program guide data to the interactive television program guide in response to the remote procedure call being invoked by the interactive television program guide.

22. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the interactive television program guide is configured to obtain program guide data from the program guide server using an object request broker; and
the program guide server is configured to provide program guide data to the interactive television program guide using the object request broker.

23. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the interactive television program guide
is configured to obtain configuration information from
the program guide server using one or more requests;
and

the program guide server is configured
to store configuration information and to provide the
configuration information to the interactive television
program guide in response to the one or more requests.

24. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the interactive television program guide
is configured to obtain user settings from the program
guide server using one or more requests; and

the program guide server is configured
to store user settings and to provide the user settings
to the program guide in response to the one or more
requests.

25. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the current program guide data has one
or more types; and

the program guide is configured to
recognize the type of current program guide data
carried in the continuous data stream and to obtain
current program guide data from the continuous data
stream when the current program guide data in the
continuous data stream is a particular type.

26. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the current program guide data has one
or more types; and

the program guide is configured to recognize the type of current program guide data carried in the continuous data stream and to obtain program guide data from the program guide server when the current program guide data in the continuous data stream is not a particular type.

27. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide is configured to obtain program guide data for a program of a particular category from the program guide server.

28. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide is configured to obtain current program guide data from the continuous data stream for a program of a particular category.

29. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide is configured to obtain current program guide data from the continuous data stream when a user indicates a desire to flip channels.

30. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the program guide is configured to (1) obtain current program guide data from the continuous data stream when a user indicates a desire to browse program listings data in a current time slot, and to (2) obtain program guide data from the program guide server when the user indicates a desire to browse program listings data in time slots other than the current time slot.

31. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the program guide server is configured
to provide program guide data to the continuous data
stream processor; and

the continuous data stream processor is
configured to receive program guide data from the
program guide server and to select current program
guide data for inclusion in the continuous data stream
from the program guide data provided by the program
guide server.

32. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the program guide server is configured
to continuously provide program guide data to the
continuous data stream processor; and

the continuous data stream processor is
configured to continuously receive program guide data
from the program guide server and to select current
program guide data for inclusion in the continuous data
stream from the program guide data provided by the
program guide server.

33. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the program guide server is configured
to periodically provide program guide data to the
continuous data stream processor; and

the continuous data stream processor is
configured to periodically receive program guide data
from the program guide server and to select current
program guide data for inclusion in the continuous data
stream from the program guide data provided by the
program guide server.

34. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the program guide server is configured
to poll the continuous data stream processor and
provide program guide data to the continuous data
stream processor; and

the continuous data stream processor is
configured to receive program guide data from the
program guide server and to select current program
guide data for inclusion in the continuous data stream
from the program guide data provided by the program
guide server.

35. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the program guide server is configured
to provide program guide data to the continuous data
stream processor in response to requests generated by
the continuous data stream processor; and

the continuous data stream processor is
configured to generate one or more requests for program
guide data, provide the one or more requests to the
program guide server, receive program guide data from
the program guide server, and to select current program
guide data for inclusion in the continuous data stream
from the program guide data provided by the program
guide server.

36. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the system further comprises a main
facility configured to provide a continuous data stream
of current program guide data; and

the continuous data stream distributed
by the distribution equipment is the continuous data
stream provided by the main facility.

37. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the continuous data stream processor is configured to select current program guide data from programmer provided in-band information.

38. The system defined in claim 1 wherein the continuous data stream processor is configured to localize program guide data provided by a main facility and to select the current program guide data for inclusion in a continuous data stream from the program guide data that is localized by the continuous data stream processor.

39. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the program guide server is configured to localize program guide data provided by a main facility; and
the distribution equipment is configured to distribute the program guide data that is localized by the program guide server.

40. The system defined in claim 1 wherein:
the continuous data stream processor is configured to select the current program guide data for inclusion in a plurality of continuous data streams wherein each continuous data stream of the plurality of continuous data streams carries current program guide data for a particular program guide display screen;
the distribution equipment is configured to distribute the plurality of continuous data streams to the user television equipment; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to obtain current program guide data for

a particular program guide display screen from the continuous data stream that carries current program guide data for that particular program guide display screen.

41. An interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided and wherein at least some of the program guide data is one or more unique identifiers, the system comprising:

a continuous data stream processor configured to select one or more unique identifiers of the one or more unique identifiers for inclusion in a continuous data stream;

distribution equipment configured to distribute the one or more unique identifiers selected by the continuous data stream processor to the user television equipment in the continuous data stream; and

an interactive television program guide implemented on the user television equipment configured to obtain the one or more unique identifiers selected by the continuous data stream processor and to perform a real-time action when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

42. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder for a program; and

the interactive television program guide is configured to display the program reminder for the program when a particular unique identifier of the one or more unique identifiers is in the continuous data stream.

43. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to prefetch current program guide data
from the continuous data stream when the reminder is
displayed by the program guide.

44. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to authorize the viewing of a pay-per-
view program when a particular unique identifier is in
the continuous data stream.

45. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to prefetch current program guide data
from the continuous data stream when the viewing of the
pay-per-view program is authorized by the program
guide.

46. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
the real-time action comprises recording
a program; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to record a program when a particular
unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

47. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
the real-time action comprises locking a program and prompting a user for a control code; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to lock a program and prompt the user for a control code when a particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

48. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program of a program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to display the program reminder for the program of a program grouping when a particular unique identifier of the one or more unique identifiers is in the continuous data stream.

49. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program of a program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide is configured to prefetch current program guide data from the continuous data stream when the reminder is displayed by the program guide.

50. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program of a
program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to authorize the viewing of a pay-per-
view program of a program grouping when a particular
unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

51. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program of a
program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to prefetch current program guide data
from the continuous data stream when the viewing of the
pay-per-view program of a program grouping is
authorized by the program guide.

52. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises recording
a program of a program grouping; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to record a program of a program grouping
when a particular unique identifier is in the
continuous data stream.

53. The system defined in claim 41 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises locking a
program of a program grouping and prompting a user for
a control code; and
the interactive television program guide
is configured to lock a program of a program grouping
and prompt the user for a control code when a
particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

54. An interactive television program guide
system in which program guide data is provided and
wherein at least some of the program guide data is
current program guide data and one or more unique
identifiers, the system comprising:
a continuous data stream processor
configured to select the current program guide data and
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers for
inclusion in a continuous data stream;
distribution equipment configured to
distribute the current program guide data and one or
more unique identifiers selected by the continuous data
stream processor in the continuous data stream to the
user television equipment;
a program guide server; and
an interactive television program guide
implemented on user television equipment configured:
to obtain one or more of the one or
more unique identifiers from the continuous data
stream;
to obtain the current program guide
data from the continuous data stream and to store at

least some of the current program guide data in a database stored in the user television equipment; and to obtain at least some of the program guide data from the program guide server in response to requests generated by the interactive television program guide.

55. The system defined in claim 54 wherein the interactive television program guide is configured to store at least some of the program guide data obtained from the program guide server in the database.

56. An interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided and wherein at least some of the program guide data is one or more unique identifiers, the system comprising:
a continuous data stream processor configured to select one or more unique identifiers of the one or more unique identifiers for inclusion in a continuous data stream;
distribution equipment configured to distribute the one or more unique identifiers selected by the continuous data stream processor to the user television equipment in the continuous data stream;
a program guide server; and
an interactive television program guide implemented on user television equipment configured to obtain the one or more unique identifiers from the continuous data stream and to obtain at least some of the program guide data from the program guide server in response to requests generated by the interactive television program guide.

57. An interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided to an interactive television program guide implemented on user television equipment and wherein at least some of the program guide data is current program guide data, the system comprising:

means for selecting current program guide data for inclusion in a continuous data stream;

means for distributing the current program guide data selected by the means for selecting to the user television equipment in the continuous data stream;

means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach; and

means for obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream and to obtain program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using the interactive television program guide implemented on the user television equipment in response to requests generated by the interactive television program guide.

58. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the current program guide data comprises one or more unique identifiers; and

the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for performing a real-time action when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

59. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder for a program; and
the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for displaying the program
reminder for the program when a particular unique
identifier of the one or more unique identifiers is in
the continuous data stream.

60. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder; and
the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for prefetching the current
program guide data from the continuous data stream when
the reminder is displayed by the means for performing a
real-time action.

61. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program; and
the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for authorizing the viewing of a
pay-per-view program when a particular unique
identifier is in the continuous data stream.

62. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program; and
the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for prefetching current program
guide data from the continuous data stream when the

viewing of the pay-per-view program is authorized by the means for performing a real-time action.

63. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
the real-time action comprises recording a program; and

the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for recording a program when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

64. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
the real-time action comprises locking a program and prompting a user for a control code; and

the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for locking a program and prompting the user for a control code when a particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

65. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;

the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program of a program grouping; and

the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for displaying the program reminder for the program of a program grouping when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

66. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder for a program of a
program grouping; and

the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for prefetching current program
guide data from the continuous data stream when the
reminder is displayed by the means for performing a
real-time action.

67. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program of a
program grouping; and

the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for authorizing the viewing of a
pay-per-view program of a program grouping when a
particular unique identifier is in the continuous data
stream.

68. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program of a
program grouping; and

the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for prefetching current program
guide data from the continuous data stream when the

viewing of the pay-per-view program of a program grouping is authorized by the means for performing a real-time action.

69. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises recording a program of a program grouping; and
the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for recording a program of a program grouping when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

70. The system defined in claim 58 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises locking a program of a program grouping and prompting a user for a control code; and
the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for locking a program of a program grouping and prompting the user for a control code when a particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

71. The system defined in claim 57 wherein the means for selecting obtains current program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach.

72. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for selecting comprises means
for prioritizing the current program guide data; and
the means for distributing comprises
means for cycling the current program guide data in the
continuous data stream according to how the current
program guide data was prioritized by the means for
selecting.

73. The system defined in claim 57 wherein
the means for obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data using the interactive television
program guide comprises means for processing the
current program guide data in real-time and with no
data caching.

74. The system defined in claim 57 wherein
the user television equipment comprises means for
filtering current program guide data from the
continuous data stream based on a tag.

75. The system defined in claim 57 wherein
the means for obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data using the interactive television
program guide comprises means for prefetching current
program guide data from the continuous data stream.

76. The system defined in claim 57 wherein
the means for obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data using the interactive television
program guide comprises means for prefetching program
guide data from the means for providing program guide
data using a client-server based approach.

77. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for invoking a remote procedure call on the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach; and

the means providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises means for providing the program guide data to the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide in response to the remote procedure call being invoked.

78. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for using an object request broker to obtain program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach; and

the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises means for providing program guide data to the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide using the object request broker.

79. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for obtaining

configuration information from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach using one or more requests; and

the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises means for storing configuration information and providing the configuration information to the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide in response to the one or more requests.

80. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for obtaining user settings from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach using one or more requests; and

the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises means for storing user settings and for providing the user settings to the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide in response to the one or more requests.

81. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the current program guide data has one or more types; and
the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for recognizing the type of current program guide data

carried in the continuous data stream and for obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream when the current program guide data in the continuous data stream is a particular type.

82. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the current program guide data has one or more types; and

the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for recognizing the type of current program guide data carried in the continuous data stream and for obtaining program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach when the current program guide data in the continuous data stream is not a particular type.

83. The system defined in claim 57 wherein the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for obtaining program guide data for a program of a particular category from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach.

84. The system defined in claim 57 wherein the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream for a program of a particular category.

85. The system defined in claim 57 wherein the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream when a user indicates a desire to flip channels.

86. The system defined in claim 57 wherein the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises:

means for obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream when a user indicates a desire to browse program listings data in a current time slot; and

means for obtaining program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach when the user indicates a desire to browse program listings data in time slots other than the current time slot.

87. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises means for providing program guide data to the means for selecting current program guide data; and

the means for selecting current program guide data comprises means for receiving program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach and for selecting current program guide data for inclusion in the continuous data stream from the program guide data

provided by the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach.

88. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises means for continuously providing program guide data to the means for selecting current program guide data; and
the means for selecting current program guide data comprises means for continuously receiving program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach and for selecting current program guide data for inclusion in the continuous data stream from the program guide data provided by the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach.

89. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises means for periodically providing program guide data to the means for selecting current program guide data; and
the means for selecting current program guide data comprises means for periodically receiving program guide data from the program guide server and for selecting current program guide data for inclusion in the continuous data stream from the program guide data provided by the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach.

90. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises

means for polling the means for selecting current program guide data and providing program guide data to the means for selecting current program guide data; and

the means for selecting current program guide data comprises means for receiving program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach and for selecting current program guide data for inclusion in the continuous data stream from the program guide data provided by the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach.

91. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach comprises means for providing program guide data to the means for selecting current program guide data in response to requests generated by the means for selecting current program guide data; and

the means for selecting current program guide data comprises means for generating one or more requests for program guide data, providing the one or more requests to the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach, receiving program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach, and selecting current program guide data for inclusion in the continuous data stream from the program guide data provided by the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach.

92. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the system further comprises means for providing a continuous data stream of current program guide data to the means for selecting current program guide data; and

the continuous data stream distributed by the means for distributing is the continuous data stream provided by the means for providing a continuous data stream of current program guide data to the means for selecting current program guide data.

93. The system defined in claim 57 wherein the means for selecting current program guide data is configured to select current program guide data from programmer provided in-band information.

94. The system defined in claim 57 wherein the means for selecting current program guide data comprises means for localizing program guide data provided by a means for providing a continuous data stream of current program guide data and for selecting the current program guide data for inclusion in a continuous data stream from the program guide data that is localized by the means for selecting current program guide data.

95. The system defined in claim 57 wherein:
the means for selecting current program guide data is configured to select the current program guide data for inclusion in a plurality of continuous data streams wherein each continuous data stream of the plurality of continuous data streams carries current

program guide data for a particular program guide display screen;

the means for distributing comprises means for distributing the plurality of continuous data streams to the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide; and

the means for obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises means for obtaining current program guide data for a particular program guide display screen from the continuous data stream that carries current program guide data for that particular program guide display screen.

96. An interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided to an interactive television program guide implemented on user television equipment and wherein at least some of the program guide data is one or more unique identifiers, the system comprising:

means for selecting one or more unique identifiers of the one or more unique identifiers for inclusion in a continuous data stream;

means for distributing the one or more unique identifiers selected by the means for selecting to the user television equipment in the continuous data stream; and

means using the interactive television program guide for obtaining the one or more unique identifiers selected by the means for selecting and for performing a real-time action when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

97. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder for a program; and
the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for displaying the program
reminder for the program when a particular unique
identifier of the one or more unique identifiers is in
the continuous data stream.

98. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder; and
the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for prefetching the current
program guide data from the continuous data stream when
the reminder is displayed by the means for performing a
real-time action.

99. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program; and
the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for authorizing the viewing of a
pay-per-view program when a particular unique
identifier is in the continuous data stream.

100. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program; and
the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for prefetching current program
guide data from the continuous data stream when the

viewing of the pay-per-view program is authorized by the means for performing a real-time action.

101. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
the real-time action comprises recording a program; and

the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for recording a program when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

102. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
the real-time action comprises locking a program and prompting a user for a control code; and

the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for locking a program and prompting the user for a control code when a particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

103. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;

the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program of a program grouping; and

the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for displaying the program reminder for the program of a program grouping when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

104. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder for a program of a
program grouping; and

the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for prefetching current program
guide data from the continuous data stream when the
reminder is displayed by the means for performing a
real-time action.

105. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program of a
program grouping; and

the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for authorizing the viewing of a
pay-per-view program of a program grouping when a
particular unique identifier is in the continuous data
stream.

106. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program of a
program grouping; and

the means for performing a real-time
action comprises means for prefetching current program
guide data from the continuous data stream when the

viewing of the pay-per-view program of a program grouping is authorized by the means for performing a real-time action.

107. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises recording a program of a program grouping; and
the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for recording a program of a program grouping when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

108. The system defined in claim 96 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises locking a program of a program grouping and prompting a user for a control code; and
the means for performing a real-time action comprises means for locking a program of a program grouping and prompting the user for a control code when a particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

109. An interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided to an interactive television program guide implemented on user television equipment and wherein at least some of the program guide data is current program guide data and one or more unique identifiers, the system comprising:

means for selecting current program guide data and one or more of the one or more unique identifiers for inclusion in the continuous data stream;

means for distributing the current program guide data and one or more unique identifiers selected by the means for selecting in the continuous data stream to the user television equipment;

means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach; and

means using the interactive television program guide to obtain:

one or more unique identifiers from the continuous data stream using the interactive television program guide;

current program guide data from a data stream and to store at least some of the current program guide data in a database stored in the user television equipment; and

program guide data from the means for providing in response to requests generated by the interactive television program guide.

110. The system defined in claim 109 wherein the means for obtaining comprises means for storing at least some of the program guide data in the database.

111. An interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided to an interactive television program guide implemented on user television equipment wherein at least some of the program guide data is one or more unique identifiers, the system comprising:

means for selecting one or more of the one or more unique identifiers for inclusion in a continuous data stream;

means for distributing the one or more unique identifiers selected by the means for selecting in the continuous data stream to the user television equipment;

means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach; and

means for obtaining identifiers using the interactive television program guide from the continuous data stream and to obtain program guide data from the means for providing program guide data using a client-server based approach.

112. A method in an interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided to an interactive television program guide implemented on user television equipment and wherein at least some of the program guide data is current program guide data, the method comprising:

selecting current program guide data for inclusion in a continuous data stream using a continuous data stream processor;

distributing the selected current program guide data to the user television equipment in the continuous data stream;

providing program guide data using a program guide server; and

obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream and from the program guide server using the interactive television program guide implemented on the user television equipment in

response to requests generated by the interactive television program guide.

113. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
the current program guide data comprises one or more unique identifiers; and
the method further comprises performing a real-time action using the interactive television program guide when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

114. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program; and
the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to display the program reminder for the program when a particular unique identifier of the one or more unique identifiers is in the continuous data stream.

115. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder; and
the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to prefetch current program guide data from the continuous data stream when the reminder is displayed by the program guide.

116. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
the real-time action comprises authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program; and

the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to authorize the viewing of a pay-per-view program when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

117. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program; and
the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to prefetch current program guide data from the continuous data stream when the viewing of the pay-per-view program is authorized by the program guide.

118. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
the real-time action comprises recording a program; and
the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to record a program when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

119. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
the real-time action comprises locking a program and prompting a user for a control code; and
the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to lock a program and prompt the user for a control code when a particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

120. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;

the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program of a program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to display the program reminder for the program of a program grouping when a particular unique identifier of the one or more unique identifiers is in the continuous data stream.

121. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;

the real-time action comprises displaying a program reminder for a program of a program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to prefetch current program guide data from the continuous data stream when the reminder is displayed by the program guide.

122. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique identifiers is a program grouping identifier;

the real-time action comprises authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program of a program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the interactive television program guide to authorize the viewing of a pay-per-view program of a program grouping when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

123. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program of a
program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to prefetch
current program guide data from the continuous data
stream when the viewing of the pay-per-view program of
a program grouping is authorized by the program guide.

124. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises recording
a program of a program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to record a
program of a program grouping when a particular unique
identifier is in the continuous data stream.

125. The method defined in claim 113 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises locking a
program of a program grouping and prompting a user for
a control code; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to lock a program
of a program grouping and prompt the user for a control
code when a particular identifier is in the continuous
data stream.

126. The method defined in claim 112 further comprising providing program guide data from the program guide server to the continuous data stream processor.

127. The method defined in claim 112 further comprising:

prioritizing the current program guide data; and

cycling the current program guide data in the continuous data stream according to how the current program listings data was prioritized.

128. The method defined in claim 112 further comprising processing the current program guide data in real-time and with no data caching using the interactive television program guide.

129. The method defined in claim 112 further comprising filtering current program guide data from the continuous data stream based on a tag.

130. The method defined in claim 112 further comprising prefetching current program guide data from the continuous data stream using the interactive television program guide.

131. The method defined in claim 112 further comprising prefetching program guide data from the program guide server using the interactive television program guide.

132. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data comprises invoking a remote
procedure call on the program guide server using the
interactive television program guide; and
providing program guide data using a
program guide server comprises providing program guide
data in response to the remote procedure call being
invoked on the program guide server.

133. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data comprises using an object request
broker to obtain program guide data from the program
guide server; and
providing program guide data using a
program guide server comprises providing program guide
data using the object request broker.

134. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data using the interactive television
program guide comprises obtaining configuration
information from the program guide server using one or
more requests; and
providing program guide data using a program
guide server comprises storing configuration
information and providing the configuration information
to the interactive television program guide in response
to the one or more requests.

135. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data using the interactive television
program guide comprises obtaining user settings from
the program guide server using one or more requests;
and

providing program guide data using a
program guide server comprises storing user settings
and providing the user settings to the interactive
television program guide in response to the one or more
requests.

136. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
the current program guide data has one
or more types; and

obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data using the interactive television
program guide comprises recognizing the type of current
program guide data carried in the continuous data
stream and obtaining current program guide data from
the continuous data stream when the current program
guide data in the continuous data stream is a
particular type.

137. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
the current program guide data has one
or more types; and

obtaining current program guide data and
program guide data using the interactive television
program guide comprises recognizing the type of current
program guide data carried in the continuous data
stream and obtaining program guide data from the
program guide server when the current program guide

data in the continuous data stream is not a particular type.

138. The method defined in claim 112 wherein obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises obtaining program guide data for a program of a particular category from the program guide server.

139. The method defined in claim 112 wherein obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream for a program of a particular category.

140. The method defined in claim 112 wherein obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream when a user indicates a desire to flip channels.

141. The method defined in claim 112 wherein obtaining current program guide data and program guide data using the interactive television program guide comprises:

- obtaining current program guide data from the continuous data stream when a user indicates a desire to browse program listings data in a current time slot; and

- obtaining program guide data from the program guide server when the user indicates a desire

to browse program listings data in time slots other than the current time slot.

142. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
the method further comprises providing
program guide data from the program guide server to the
continuous data stream processor; and

selecting current program guide data for
inclusion in the continuous data stream comprises
selecting current program guide data from the program
guide data provided by the program guide server.

143. The system defined in claim 112 wherein:
the method further comprises
continuously providing program guide data from the
program guide server to the continuous data stream
processor; and

selecting current program guide data for
inclusion in the continuous data stream comprises
selecting current program guide data from the program
guide data provided by the program guide server.

144. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
the method further comprises
periodically providing program guide data from the
program guide server to the continuous data stream
processor; and

selecting current program guide data for
inclusion in the continuous data stream comprises
selecting current program data from the program guide
data provided by the program guide server.

145. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
the method further comprises polling the
continuous data stream processor and providing program
guide data from the program guide server to the
continuous data stream processor; and

selecting current program guide data for
inclusion in the continuous data stream comprises
selecting current program data from the program guide
data provided by the program guide server.

146. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
the method further comprises:

providing program guide data from the
program guide server to the continuous data stream
processor in response to requests generated by the
continuous data stream processor;

generating one or more requests for
program guide data with the continuous data stream
processor;

providing the one or more requests to
the program guide server;

receiving program guide data from the
program guide server; and

wherein selecting current program guide
data for inclusion in the continuous data stream
comprises selecting current program data from the
program guide data provided by the program guide
server.

147. The method defined in claim 112 wherein:
the method further comprises providing a
continuous data stream of current program guide data
from a main facility; and

distributing the continuous data stream comprises distributing the continuous data stream provided by the main facility.

148. The method defined in claim 112 wherein selecting current program guide data comprises selecting current program guide data from programmer provided in-band information.

149. The method defined in claim 112 further comprising localizing program guide data provided by a main facility using the continuous data stream processor; and

wherein selecting the current program guide data for inclusion in a continuous data stream comprises selecting current program guide data from program guide data that is localized by the continuous data stream processor.

150. The method defined in claim 112 wherein: the method further comprises localizing program guide data provided by a main facility using the program guide server; and

wherein distributing current program guide data comprises distributing current program guide data that is localized by the program guide server.

151. The method defined in claim 112 wherein: selecting program guide data comprises selecting current program guide data for inclusion in a plurality of continuous data streams wherein each continuous data stream of the plurality of continuous

data streams carries current program guide data for a particular program guide display screen;

distributing the current program guide data comprises distributing the plurality of continuous data streams to the user television equipment; and

the method further comprises obtaining current program guide data for a particular program guide display screen from the continuous data stream that carries current program guide data for that particular program guide display screen using the interactive television program guide.

152. A method in an interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided to an interactive television program guide implemented on user television equipment and wherein at least some of the program guide data is one or more unique identifiers, the system comprising:

selecting one or more unique identifiers of the one or more unique identifiers for inclusion in a continuous data stream using a continuous data stream processor;

distributing the one or more unique identifiers selected by the continuous data stream processor to the user television equipment in the continuous data stream;

obtaining the one or more unique identifiers selected by the continuous data stream processor using the interactive television program guide; and

performing a real-time action when a particular unique identifier is in the continuous data stream using the interactive television program guide.

153. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder for a program; and
the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to display the
program reminder for the program when a particular
unique identifier of the one or more unique identifiers
is in the continuous data stream.

154. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder; and
the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to prefetch
current program guide data from the continuous data
stream when the reminder is displayed by the program
guide.

155. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program; and
the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to authorize the
viewing of a pay-per-view program when a particular
unique identifier is in the continuous data stream.

156. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program; and
the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to prefetch
current program guide data from the continuous data

stream when the viewing of the pay-per-view program is authorized by the program guide.

157. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
the real-time action comprises recording
a program; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to record a
program when a particular unique identifier is in the
continuous data stream.

158. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
the real-time action comprises locking a
program and prompting a user for a control code; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to lock a program
and prompt the user for a control code when a
particular identifier is in the continuous data stream.

159. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;

the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder for a program of a
program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to display the
program reminder for the program of a program grouping
when a particular unique identifier of the one or more
unique identifiers is in the continuous data stream.

160. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
displaying a program reminder for a program of a
program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to prefetch
current program guide data from the continuous data
stream when the reminder is displayed by the program
guide.

161. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing the viewing of a pay-per-view program of a
program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to authorize the
viewing of a pay-per-view program of a program grouping
when a particular unique identifier is in the
continuous data stream.

162. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises
authorizing a viewing of a pay-per-view-program of a
program grouping; and

the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to prefetch
current program guide data from the continuous data

stream when the viewing of the pay-per-view program of a program grouping is authorized by the program guide.

163. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises recording
a program of a program grouping; and
the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to record a
program of a program grouping when a particular unique
identifier is in the continuous data stream.

164. The method defined in claim 152 wherein:
one or more of the one or more unique
identifiers is a program grouping identifier;
the real-time action comprises locking a
program of a program grouping and prompting a user for
a control code; and
the method further comprises using the
interactive television program guide to lock a program
of a program grouping and prompt the user for a control
code when a particular identifier is in the continuous
data stream.

165. A method in an interactive television
program guide system in which program guide data is
provided to an interactive television program guide
implemented on user television equipment and wherein at
least some of the program guide data is current program
guide data and one or more unique identifiers, the
method comprising:

selecting current program guide data and one or more of the one or more unique identifiers for inclusion in the continuous data stream;

distributing the selected current program guide data and one or more unique identifiers in the continuous data stream to the user television equipment;

providing program guide data using a program guide server; and

using the interactive television program guide to obtain:

one or more unique identifiers from the continuous data stream using the interactive television program guide;

current program guide data from the continuous data stream and to store at least some of the current program guide data in a database stored in the user television equipment; and

program guide data from the program guide server in response to requests generated by the interactive television program guide.

166. The method defined in claim 165 further comprising storing at least some of the program guide data in the database.

167. A method in an interactive television program guide system in which program guide data is provided to an interactive television program guide implemented on user television equipment and wherein at least some of the program guide data is one or more unique identifiers, the method comprising:

selecting one or more of the one or more unique identifiers for inclusion in a continuous data stream;

distributing the selected one or more unique identifiers in the continuous data stream to the user television equipment;

providing program guide data using a program guide server; and

obtaining identifiers from the continuous data stream and obtaining program guide data from the program guide server using the interactive television program guide.